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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 001130

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 1/20/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [PTER](#) [EUN](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: GOF REAFFIRMS QUARTET CONDITIONS, NO-CONTACT WITH
HAMAS, BUT NO DECISIONS YET ON ASSISTANCE TO HAMAS-LED PA

REF: A. STATE 27174

[1](#)B. PARIS 945

[1](#)C. PARIS 853

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: MFA and Elysee contacts continue to reiterate
GoF attachment to the Quartet conditions and that the GoF has
no intention of seeking contacts with Hamas. At the same
time, GOF contacts remain reluctant to prejudge the
consequences of Hamas refusal to meet Quartet conditions on
EU assistance, and continue to caution against threats to cut
off aid to the PA prior to formation of a new Palestinian
government. Rather than accept that Hamas rejection of the
Quartet conditions should result in withdrawal of
international support, GoF contacts are emphasizing the need
to find creative ways to continue EU assistance, including
possibly making a distinction between PA President Abbas and
a Hamas led-government. GoF contacts also stress that no
decisions on future assistance have been taken (consultations
with FS Straw on the issue will take place in Paris February
27-28) and that the international community should not let
the Palestinian territories slip into chaos. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) We discussed ref A points discouraging contacts with
Hamas with MFA Cabinet Advisor for the Middle East Christophe
Guilhou and MFA DAS-equivalent for Egypt/Levant affairs Herve
Besancenot. Presidential Technical Advisor for Middle
East/Americas Dominique Boche, during a February 21 meeting
with Staffdel Talwar, also reviewed GoF policy on Hamas, in
addition to other topics. (Septel reports on Staffdel
Talwar's discussions with Boche and other GoF officials on
Iran, Iraq, Middle East reform, and NATO/Darfur.)

[1](#)3. (C) Responding to reftel points February 21, Guilhou
reaffirmed that the GoF had no intention of following
Russia's example of initiating contact with Hamas. He
conceded that the MFA spokesperson had mishandled the initial
GoF reaction to the Russian Hamas initiative on February 10
by overemphasizing the positive (ref b); this misstep,
coupled with false press reports of GoF meetings with Hamas
representatives in the Arabian Gulf had fueled erroneous
speculation that France was seeking, or had already
initiated, contact with Hamas. Guilhou reiterated that the
conditions for GoF contact and cooperation with the new PA
government remained those of the Quartet: 1) renunciation of
violence, 2) recognition of Israel, and 3) recognition of
past accords with Israel. Guilhou reported that FM
Dousté-Blazy had emphasized these points in a meeting with
visiting members of the American Jewish Committee February
20, while PM Villepin had emphasized a similar message in a
speech to the annual dinner of France's leading Jewish
organizations that same evening. Guilhou clarified that the
EU terrorism designation of Hamas remained an additional bar
to GoF contact with Hamas, independent of the Quartet

conditions.

14. (C) At the same time, Guilhou cautioned against threats to cut off aid to the PA prior to formation of the new government, which he warned could lead the Palestinian people to believe they were being punished for exercising their democratic choice, and further rally Palestinian public support for Hamas. He warned that attempts to "strangle" the PA by cutting off all international support could backfire, and push the Palestinian territories into chaos. Poloff responded by dismissing allegations that the U.S. and Israel were seeking to destabilize the new PA government or punish the Palestinian people. The requirements which we and the GoF were asking of Hamas were applicable to any Palestinian government, and it was up to Hamas, as the majority party in the PLC, to bear responsibility for the decisions it makes. Guilhou concluded that the EU was unlikely to reach a common position on future assistance during next week's GAERC, and that the issue would be a major topic of discussion during FS Straw's February 27-28 visit to Paris.

15. (C) In a separate discussion with poloff, MFA DAS-equivalent for Egypt/Levant affairs Herve Besancenot reiterated the GoF's firm attachment to the Quartet conditions, noting that France had been the first to articulate the three conditions which were later reflected in the EU and Quartet statements. At the same time, Besancenot warned against precipitous decisions or warnings of an aid cutoff to the PA prior to formation of the new Palestinian government. Instead, Besancenot advocated a "wait and see" approach in the weeks leading to formation of the new government, giving Hamas time to "gain maturity" and fulfill the international community's conditions without losing face. Besancenot conceded that while the chances that Hamas would meet the Quartet conditions were slim, it was still "worth a

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try."

16. (C) Besancenot added that the threat of financial repercussions should be wielded carefully, and not in a way that gave Palestinians the impression they were being punished for the election results, or that resulted in unpaid security forces taking to the streets. Besancenot suggested finding creative ways to continue EU assistance in the event of a Hamas-dominated government which refused the Quartet conditions; he cited, as a possible idea under consideration, making a distinction between the PA led by Abbas and a Hamas-led Palestinian government, in a way that would allow the EU to continue to help Abbas implement his programs. Another option could be payment of PA debts owed to Israeli creditors, for example PA debts to Israeli companies for electricity provision in Gaza. Poloff cautioned Besancenot that the Quartet statement articulated clear expectations of the new Palestinian government without exceptions, and reiterated the importance of international unity on the consequences Hamas must face if it refused to abandon terrorism and accept the two-state framework. Besancenot concluded that the GoF was trying to advance ideas within the EU, but the decisionmaking process remained difficult at 25. He cited the upcoming FS Straw visit as a key opportunity to develop a common French-UK position on assistance.

17. (C) In a separate discussion with Staffdel Talwar (septel), Elysee advisor Boche stressed that France had no part in the Russian initiative on Hamas; the GoF had accepted Russian dialogue with Hamas only to the extent to which it would push Hamas towards acceptance of Quartet conditions. He added that the GoF was not seeking dialogue with Hamas and would not copy the Russians. While the GoF had supported Hamas' participation in the Palestinian elections to give Palestinians a true choice, Boche asserted that Hamas would have to "change its nature totally" if it wanted to be an interlocutor for the international community. That said, Boche stressed that the Hamas election victory presented two dilemmas: how the international community would deal with the

new PA, and the impact on international assistance. On contacts, Boche asserted that that Hamas majority represented one part of the PA; President Abbas remained the PA's elected President, with whom the GoF would maintain full contact, and he retained key constitutional powers on defense and foreign policy. Without offering further explanation, Boche added that the PLO also had a competency for Palestinian issues beyond that of the PA. Boche asserted that any assistance to the Palestinian government should be in accordance with the behavior of that government. He refrained from pronouncing further on possible assistance cut-offs, noting that we should wait until formation of the new PA government.

18. (C) Comment: While the GoF appears on board on refraining from contact with Hamas, French officials' disquiet on the negative impact of an assistance cut-off to the PA and their "wait and see approach" to formation of the PA government suggests a troubling inclination towards softening the impact of the likely Hamas rejection of the Quartet conditions. We will continue to press the GoF to adhere to the Quartet conditions and remain united in our demands of the new government, stressing that the burden of compliance and responsibility for the consequences rests with Hamas. The expected visits to Paris next week by FS Straw and Israeli FM Livni should also help to keep the French on message. End comment.

19. (U) This message was cleared by Staffdel Talwar.

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Hofmann